

Movie Makers

January—February, 2003

Volume 13 No. 1

The American Motion Picture Society

Sponsors of the oldest continuing Film/video Festival in the world.

Camera Filters for Video

Ned Cordery

Modern NLE systems offer many ways of manipulating the video image but for those of us who started in the days when we loaded rolls of film into our cameras the use of camera filters and a compendium were an essential part of life. It is interesting to see that there is a move back to more control of the image at the shooting stage and the back pages of the video magazines carry ads for compendiums to use filter squares at prices about equivalent to a single chip camera! I wanted to get back to my roots but not at those prices so I checked out some possibilities and put together my own compendium and filter kit using these components:

1. Cokin Filter Holder P 7.95
2. Cokin P472 72 FD
Adaptor ring to fit
my Canon XL1s 9.15
3. Lee Pro Hood for
Cokin P (bellows) 64.00

Total 81.10

This set up allows for the installation of two filters at the Cokin filter holder and the front of the Lee Hood has a holder 4 ½ inches by 4 inches so that can be used for mattes or masks.

The Cokin range is very wide, I use the P series filters and have the following:

ND4 and ND8 - one of the problems with video cameras is their enormous depth of field and even with the built in

ND filter in the bright sunshine of the Southwest the aperture may still be well stopped down and differential focus difficult if not impossible. These NDs with the camera ND give me a high level of aperture control.

Diffuser 2 - video delivers a very "hard" image and some degree of softening is useful particularly for romantic shots.

Black Net 2 - this is supposed to help give a "film" look, but I have not had much success with it and in wide angle and small apertures the net is in focus.

Fog 2 - does what it says, useful for atmospheric effects.

(Continued on page 5)

inside...

Get It In Writing!
How Judges See It
The National Archives
A Simple Way to Create a Script

page 3
page 4
page 5
page 7

Movie Makers

Dedicated to the interests of the Serious Motion Picture Maker.

Vol.13 January-February 2003
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George W. Cushman
Founder,
1909-1996

Matt Jenkins, Editor

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From the Editor

Happy New Year!

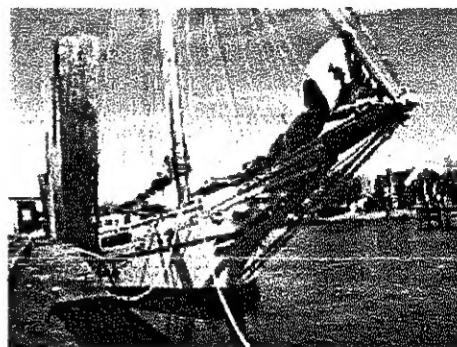
I hope this year brings much joy and lots of production for you.

My first task this year is to begin editing my documentary profiling the U.S.S. Nautilus and her historic trip to the North Pole. Those of you have read this column over the past year might remember that I have been writing about two other documentaries that I have been working on. One was on an oyster-dredging sailboat called a skipjack. The other was concerned with a printing museum in Guthrie, Oklahoma.

You may recall I wrote an article called "Some Will Like It, Some Won't" in the September-October, 2002 issue regarding three producers' comments concerning the skipjack documentary. Since then I have approached museums about offering this documentary in their gift shops with no success. I have also entered this production into six film festivals. I really tried to select festivals on how I thought the content would fit. I entered it into the Double Take Documentary Festival and I also entered it into a film festival sponsored by Johns Hopkins University.

Since Johns Hopkins is located near the Chesapeake Bay and this documentary covers a boat on the Chesapeake Bay I thought it might be selected.

I also entered into the Broadcast Education Association Competition and First Glance Phillie. I don't know much about the First Glance festivals other than I have been rejected before. I entered it into the JVC Tokyo festival because it was free to enter.



And the documentary was entered into the Black Maria Film Festival as a long shot. The plans are to enter it into at least one more festival.

I haven't approached local access channels and low power TV stations about broadcasting this documentary yet as I am really interested in trying to get it aired on a larger venue. I have found one cable channel that originates from the Dallas, Texas area called RFD-TV. It is a channel devoted to rural farm life in America. What does a documentary about a skipjack have in common with rural farm life? Not

(Continued on page 6)

Get It In Writing

Stan Whitsitt

An old piece of legalese tells us to "Get it in writing." This bit of advice also applies to our movie making.

It's a pity, but the amateur filmer doesn't start putting anything on paper until the film is shot and edited.

The ideal motion picture would tell the story with no sound, but alas, we do not live in an ideal world, and audiences have been conditioned to expect sound. Thus, most filmmakers would be better served by scripting their films for shooting and narration before starting a movie.

Alfred Hitchcock compares a filmmaker shooting off the cuff, making thing up as he goes along, to a composer attempting to compose a symphony before an expectant orchestra.

Shooting script will illustrate your idea and provide a road map of where you want your story to go. In short it will:

1. save time in shooting,
2. save money by less wasted film,

3. will guarantee a better film. Critical shots and scenes will be less likely to be forgotten.

We usually don't start thinking about our narration until we have the film all edited, but after thoroughly researching our subject before shooting, a rough draft of a narration will help. Pick the key points you want your picture to put across and rough out a narration that covers them. This will help you know what key scenes to look for to get your story or point across on the screen.

How many times have we had something we wanted to say but no footage to illustrate it. Too many people ignore this and their narration is saying one thing while the audience is watching totally unrelated images. This is very disconcerting to the viewer.

Assuming your film is edited and you are ready to take off from your original rough draft and do the final narration, the following steps will insure a happy ending for your film project.

1. Do a final check on your research. In every audience there is at least one person who looks for flaws in the presentation, and gets his jollies from pointing them out to everybody else.

2. Project the edited film and take notes on the parts that need narration.
3. Time each sequence and measure its length.
4. Do a final draft of the narration, keeping in mind the time frame in which each sequence will fill.
5. Read the narration aloud while screening the film. Note where adjustments in length or style must be made.
6. Record the completed narration to run along with the film.

Admittedly, the foregoing methods do add more work to the chore of making a movie, but most filers will find they more than pay off in the quality of the finished product.

If you plan to show your work to other than your immediate family, you owe your audience the best product you can produce.

WRITE ON!



How Judges See It

No. 22 – January 1995

George Cushman

This month we present comments heard from three judges over the years. All three are now deceased.

JUDGE A.

All kinds of movies are entered into competition. Some show a lot of work on the part of the maker, others show very little. Making a movie is a lot more than pressing a button, yet in many pictures we see today that's all the guy did.

Documentaries are the best evidence of this. A guy goes out on a weekend and shoots a few scenes and then expects to win a contest. He hasn't created anything. When a picture shows planning and editing and has continuity and flows well, you know the maker has worked over his footage to where it is worth looking at.

Once a watched film obviously shot from a seat in the circus. All shots were made from that one location with a one-inch lens, obviously from

the maker's seat. The circus was entertaining. The film, obviously, was nothing.

I look for movies where a worker has tried to create a movie out of his footage.

JUDGE B.

There are many ways of communicating and a motion picture is but one of them. Reading, talking, the stage – they all depend upon words. A movie is different. For its



language it uses pictures and action to communicate.

When a movie gets its message across that way it is head and shoulders above those that go the easy route and fall back on the spoken word as so many do.

This erroneous practice seems to have grown with the use of video cameras shoot in sync sound. It is tempting to shoot long passages, even interviews, in sound. The static results leave nothing to judge on.

JUDGE C.

Judging a movie contest is a treat because you meet so many people you never see, the people who made the movie. It was that excellent cinematographer Glen Turner who said, "In making a movie we give of ourselves. A film is a personal revelation."

By watching a movie we come to know the maker, how he thinks, even his likes and dislikes as he tends to pass his observations of life on to those who watch his pictures, and so much of it is done in editing.

The answer comes in how well he has expressed himself in the medium he has chosen. How well did he make us, the judges and the viewers, see the world as he sees it? It is easy to tell when a filmmaker has carefully weighed his thoughts and has planned on how he wants to present them on film. When it gets across he has succeeded.

The National Archives

Matt Jenkins

Are you producing a documentary that needs a special photograph? Don't know where to start in looking for historical photos to include in your production? Try looking in National Archives. According to the government:

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is an independent federal agency that preserves our nation's history and defines us as a people by overseeing the management of all federal records.

Enshrined for posterity in the original building in Washington, DC, are the cornerstone documents of our government, the Charters of Freedom: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights.

The archives also contain photographs and other historical material. You may search many of the archive's holdings on-line and down load digital images to use for FREE.

Go to the site, www.archives.gov. Once on the archives home page click on the words **Research Room**.

After accessing the Research Room page click on **Archival Research Catalog (ARC)**.

Then click on the **ARC**

SEARCH icon at the top of the page. This screen will allow you to search for digital images that the archives have on-line.

As an example, you are producing a documentary regarding classic cars. In the ARC SEARCH page there is a topic/keyword box. Type in "cars."

Just below is a **Filter Your Search** box. Be sure to check **Descriptions of Archival Materials Linked to Digital Copies**. Note you can also limit your search by date, by location of the image and by type of archival material.

Click **Go**.

Thumbnail pictures related to the word "cars" appear. But they seem to be shots of the interior of railroad cars! Go back and redefine your search by using the word "automobiles" instead of cars.

Now historical thumbnail pictures of cars appear. If you find one that you want to use, click on **Larger Image** and the photograph will fill your screen. Save the large photograph to a floppy disk for use in your production. Be sure to read the accompanying information for any possible use restrictions.

You may also use the National Archives to search for film footage and photographs that are not digitally stored. And this material is also usually free to use. However, there is a copying charge and only companies chosen by the National Archives may copy the material. This gets quite expensive.

(Continued from page 1)

FLW and FLD fluorescent correctors - it is difficult to white balance under some fluorescents, these make it possible.

My total investment in filters is about another \$95 plus the \$81 for the holder and hood, so for about a third of what the big names want for a compendium I have a useful system that can be extended as far as my imagination will go.

Some practical suggestions:

Obviously using a compendium and filters is best suited to a well controlled style of shooting, it doesn't work in gun and run situations.

Check that the bellows hood does not intrude into the picture area when shooting in wide angle.

If you use color filters, white balance before you attach the filter.

For information on Cokin filters go to www.cokin.fr for information on using filters with video go to www.kenstone.net and read the article titled "The Curse of Digital Video -using filters" by Barry Braverman. I bought my filter system from www.bhphotovideo.com look under Filters on their home page. Also look at Tiffen and other suppliers of filters that fit the Cokin P series but be prepared for some price shocks. It's fun and creative using filters at the shooting stage and I hope this is of help.

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much actually but I am hoping to interest them in the series of documentaries over historical places, which this documentary is an episode.

The printing museum documentary is currently sitting idle. I had hoped for a big



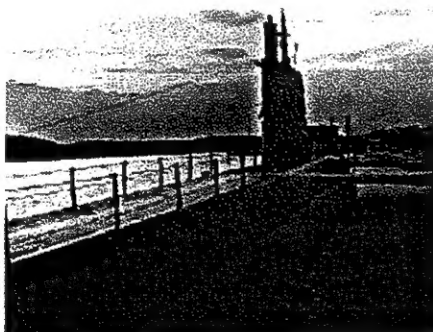
response from various people I showed it to. A common question that people primarily from the northeast asked is, what is the significance of this piece? It is a documentary covering the origins of printing in the Oklahoma Territory. Their response is — so what? Printing had been around for a long time prior to Oklahoma being settled. I tried to show the importance of printing in the settling of this area and how politics played a big role in printing but I am afraid the point was missed.

Also, there is a problem with one scene. An interviewee is describing a fire that destroyed a printing company during the pioneer days. It was pointed out to me by a museum curator that there were no known photographs of that particular fire yet I

had included pictures of a fire in that section. I had found other period photos of a different building fire and used close ups of sections of the photos. Not a good idea. So those photos have been removed.

The Nautilus documentary is moving along. I had lost my original narrator but I have secured a new one who I think will do an admirable job.

I had managed to digitally photograph 197 stills dealing with the Nautilus and shot two hours of footage aboard her after the museum had closed for the night. I also conducted over three hours of interviews with two crewmembers who served aboard



her during the trip to the North Pole.

And finally, through a grant I received, I managed to get broadcast quality copies of film footage of the Nautilus under way. The nice thing about the Nautilus was, even though it was a top secret technology, the Navy took lots of film footage of her.

Now in conducting the inter-

view, both men wanted to be interviewed at the same time. Not having a camera operator, I set my camera on a two shot. It really looks bad though when one person is talking and the other one is looking around and not paying attention. So when I put the footage into the AVID, I can zoom in on the person talking. I will let you know how it looks after I have tried working with this feature some more. I hope to have this documentary finished later in the spring.

An older documentary of mine called "B and Below: We're Not in Hollywood Anymore" is currently being "reviewed" by people at the Documentary Channel for possible broadcast. I'm not sure what is involved in reviewing something but I was told it takes a long time. They don't have to pay me for airing it, I just want them to air it.

As you might determine, it is not enough for me just to make a production and show my friends. I create documentaries and strive to get them seen by as many people as possible. I think we should all do that with our work.

After all, when we have a painting we like we hang it on the wall for others to appreciate.

As always, you may e-mail me at mattj@cameron.edu

A Simple Way to Create a Script

Matt Jenkins

Aw gee, do I have to?" is what I often hear when I require my students to write scripts before they shoot any footage.

Even though you may consider yourself to be a low/no budget producer or an amateur, you should strive to produce the best possible movie you can. And writing a script can greatly aid in this endeavor.

There are many script formats

that can be used. The format I require my students to use is called the split-page-format script. Essentially the paper is divided into two sections length-wise and audio is located on the right and the corresponding video is written on the left.

This script format is easy to use and enables the moviemaker to foresee many problems and allows the producer to be creative on paper.

The script should be neatly typed and computer word processing programs have made this an easy task. For terms of this discussion, I am referring to Microsoft Word. However, this

can be done in other word processing programs.

A simple way to create the finished script is to type the audio single spaced in paragraph form with no indentation.

Then open a new file and create a two column, one row table. Returning to your previous file, highlight and copy your audio text. Return to the two column table, paste the audio in the right hand column. It will fill the column of the first and subsequent pages allowing you to type the video in the left hand column or to hand write the video after the script is printed out.

Do you have any back issues of MovieMakers?

Members of the American Motion Picture Society are interested in obtaining back issues of the *MovieMakers* newsletter. If anyone has back issues that they would like to contribute, please contact Roger Garretson at RGARETSON@AOL.COM or to AMPS, 30 Kanan Rd, Oak Park, CA 91377-1105. We are especially interested in issues written by our founder, George Cushman.

We do have a copy of reprints of articles written by George Cushman and assembled in to a booklet entitled, "*Judging Motion Pictures*". If there is enough interest in it, we can get it copied and mailed for a nominal charge.

Upcoming Festivals

Close Date	Festival name and address for forms	Open to	Subject	Format	Time Limit	Entry Fee	Award	Show Dates
June 1, 2003	Cotswold Int'l Film & Video Festival England Visit www.cotswoldfilmvideofest.co.uk	ABCDE	G	NTSC- K PAL-MNQR Film-HJ	20min AB 25min C	\$12 A \$ 7 B \$18 C	VU	Sept 5-6 2003
A Amateur B College C Grade 1-12	D Independent E Professional F Restricted	G Open	H S8 J 16mm K VHS M SVHS	N Mini DV O other	S Regional T Exceptions U Cash V Trophies	W Certificates X Other Award	Y Members Z Non Members	

DO NOT READ THIS

Dues notice information is included on the mailing label.

Prompt payment of your dues is greatly appreciated .

Well, since you did read it, thanks for your cooperation!

Visit the AMPS web-site at:

www.angelfire.com/movies/amps

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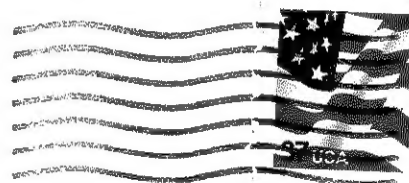
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